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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, MAY 26, 2006

In Today's Papers

Alpogan on Iran's Nuclear Efforts

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others: Turkish National Security Council (MGK) Chairman Yigit Alpogan told the press after wrapping up three-days of meetings in Moscow that Turkey would not want having a nuclear armed Iran as its neighbor, stressing that Ankara favors a diplomatic solution to the problem. 'I have explained our position to the Americans during an earlier visit to Washington. We don't believe that Iran as a nuclear power will serve world peace and regional stability. Turkey lost 50 billion USD despite the fact that it was not involved in the First Iraq War in 1991. And Turkey had to look after some 450,000 Iraqis who fled to Turkey,' Alpogan said. He added that Turkey will suffer enormous losses if a military operation is launched against Iran. Turkey views the probability of US military action against Iran this year as very low, Alpogan said, because the American public largely opposes war with Iran and there are US interim elections in November.

Nuclear Equipment Seized at Turkey-Iran Border

Milliyet and Cumhuriyet report that in a joint operation with the CIA, the Turkish intelligence agency (MIT) seized two truck loads of equipment allegedly destined for the Iranian nuclear program at the Gurbulak border crossing on the Turkey-Iran border. Cumhuriyet says the equipment was to be used in missile production and had been purchased by an Iranian company, the Istanbul-based Step Co., from firms in the EU, US, Canada, India, Ukraine, and China. Documents accompanying the shipment indicated that the end-user was in Turkey. The paper says that Turkey had been used as a bridge in ferrying 'critical' materials to Iran.

Sezer Will Not Meet Hamas on Upcoming Visit to Israel, Palestine

Radikal reports President Ahmet Necdet Sezer will not meet with Hamas leaders during an upcoming visit to Israel and Palestine on June 7-8, despite persistent efforts by Prime Minister Haniya to be received by the Turkish President. Sezer made the decision in reaction to a statement by Hamas that the killing of civilians in the April 17 suicide bomb attack in Tel Aviv was 'legitimate self-defense.' While in Palestine, Sezer will only meet with President Abbas and urge the Palestinian officials to give up efforts to legitimize their armed struggle, calling on both sides for a revival of talks under the Road Map. Diplomatic sources said the Turkish government supported Sezer's decision, and that the President would not be accompanied by cabinet ministers on his upcoming trip.

Arrests over Council of State Attack Continue
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Cumhuriyet, Radikal, Zaman and others: Erhan Timuroglu, a suspect detained in connection with last week's deadly attack on the Council of State (Danistay) and the recent grenade attacks on the Cumhuriyet daily, said if the attacker Alparslan Aslan had not been caught, they would launch bloody bombings in Istanbul and target Armenians in the city. Prior to his departure to Berlin yesterday, Prime Minister Erdogan said there was a "bloody" organization behind the Council of State attack. Erdogan slammed opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal for suggesting a link between the attackers and the ruling AK Party government.

Syrian Opposition Party Takes AKP as Model
A Syrian opposition group organized in exile in London told Hurriyet they want to meet with Prime Minister Erdogan

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during a visit to Turkey next month. The group said they take the ruling AK Party in Turkey as a model, noting their name in Arabic, 'Harakat al Adala wal Binaa,' meant 'Justice and Development Party.' The party's leader Anas al-Abdah said their members disguised as academics had toured Turkish cities last year in an effort to observe how the ruling party functioned. 'We have met with leading AKP officials during their visits to several Arab countries, including Qatar. They support us. We want to continue our party in Syria, and believe that our 'Third Way,' the 'democratic Islamist way,' will be the new face of opposition in Syria,' Abdah said.

Ataturk Airport Fire Causes 1 Billion USD Damage
All papers: Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK,) an offshoot of the outlawed PKK, claimed responsibility over the blaze that destroyed the cargo section of Istanbul's Ataturk airport, the hub of international air travel in Turkey, which slightly injured three people and caused delays in air traffic. Initial estimates put the cost of the fire at around 1 billion USD. The Turkish authorities have said an electrical short circuit was the cause of the blaze. Airport officials said some incoming planes were ordered to delay their landings and others were rerouted to the city's second airport on the Asian side of the Bosphorus Strait.

Erdogan on the Headscarf Issue
All papers: During a meeting with the representatives of the Turkish community in Berlin, a Turkish woman wearing a headscarf complained to Prime Minister Erdogan that the Turkish Embassy in the German capital demanded photographs without headscarves for visa procedures. The Turkish ambassador to Germany confirmed there was such a practice, and that the embassy only applied the instructions of Ankara. An angry Erdogan to change the instructions that were allegedly outlined in a circular sent to Turkey's foreign missions, according to reports.

Kurdish DTP Leaders to Attend Meeting in Northern Iraq
Aysel Tugluk and Ahmet Turk, co-chairpersons of the DTP, Turkey's main Kurdish party, will attend the Socialist International Kurdish Working Group meeting in Suleymaniye

on May 29, the Copenhagen-based Kurdish Roj TV reported. President Jalal Talabani, head of the Kurdistan regional government leader Nechirvan Barzani, and Speaker of the Kurdistan Parliament Adnan Mufti, and the regional president of Kurdistan, Massoud Barzani will participate in the one-day meeting.

Editorial Comments

EU: "No Similarity between the Cyprus and Montenegro Issues" Selcuk Gultasli wrote from Brussels in Islamist-intellectual Zaman (5/26): "The Europeans were very pleased about Montenegro's independence from Serbia after last week's referendum. While praising this occurrence and urging everyone to recognize Montenegro's independence, EU sources strongly object to the idea that Turkish Cypriots would separate from the Republic of Cyprus and become independent. The same EU sources say that although these two issues could be compared, still there are huge differences between them. Besides, it has not been too long since the Greek rejection of Annan plan, and Turkish Cypriots' independent structures would not be accepted by the international community until all efforts exhausted to unite the both sides in Cyprus. However, the same sources add that if the intransigent stance of Papadopoulos continues, international support for Turkish Cypriot independence could increase within few years."

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Time to Stop the Game

Sami Kohen observed in the mainstream daily Milliyet (5/26): "The meeting of Greek and Turkish Foreign Ministers in Istanbul on June 10 for the fourth 'Turkey-Greece Media Conference' will be a great opportunity to stop a very dangerous, long lasting game. After the collusion of Turkish and Greek F-16s in the Aegean, it is necessary to discuss the 'dog fight' issue and take precautions to prevent such accidents. It is good for Turkish and Greek governments to continue this dialogue, but unless the both sides' governments and military officials implement confidence building measures, talks on the technical level only will not help to resolve disagreements between Turkey and Greece. The most effective way to prevent such incidents is to declare a flight moratorium in the Aegean while the both countries seek compromise."

TV Highlights

NTV (8 a.m.)

Domestic News

- Following the collision of Turkish and Greek fighter jets over the Aegean earlier in the week, Foreign Minister Gul said an emergency phone line between the two countries would be set up soon. US State Department Spokesman Sean MacCormack said of the incident, "Those are things that we would hope that over time Greece and Turkey would be able to work through."

- The EU is expected to warn Turkey and present new demands at Turkey-EU Association Council talks on June 12 in Luxembourg: The military must speak out only on military issues; Greek Cypriots must be allowed into Turkish ports and airports; independence of the judiciary must be observed in the Semdinli trial, and Turkey must speed up reforms.

- Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement yesterday 'The Anatolian Sun 2006' military exercises to be held near Antalya today do not target any other country. The United States, France and Portugal will participate in the exercises as well as thirty-one observer countries.

- Turkey's State Statistics Institute said tourist arrivals in April rose to 1.37 million, up from last year's 1.34 million, recovering from a sharp fall in the first quarter of 2006 on bird flu fears and terrorist attacks.

International News

- Palestinian President Abbas said on Thursday he would call a referendum on a Palestinian proposal seeking a negotiated settlement with Israel if rival al-Fatah and Hamas groups do not agree on the plan.

- US Ambassador to Armenia John Evans was removed from post after acknowledging the 'genocide' of Armenians by Ottomans in 1915. Sixty US Congressmen have expressed their concern about Evans' removal in a letter to Secretary Rice.

- Sources said twenty-four ethnic Azeris were killed in the riots in northwestern Iran sparked by the publication of a cartoon that allegedly denigrated Azeris.

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